

Greenhouses and Permit to Take Water

Protecting water at its source is the first step in ensuring that every Ontarian has access to a safe and fresh water supply. The Permit to Take Water program is intended to ensure the fair sharing, conservation and sustainable use of water.

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) evaluates each proposed water taking application. Conditions are included in all approved permits to set limits on the amount of water that can be taken and to ensure it is sustainable.

This fact sheet provides greenhouse operators with important information on how and when to obtain a Permit to Take Water.

What is a Permit to Take Water?

Water takings are governed by the Ontario Water Resources Act. A Permit to Take Water is an approval to take water from the environment according to set conditions. Anyone taking more than 50,000 litres of water in a day from a lake, stream, river, pond or groundwater source needs a Permit to Take Water. The permit lists the locations of the water taking sources along with the time periods and rates at which water may be drawn.

Do I need a Permit to Take Water for my greenhouse operation?

You need a Permit to Take Water if in a day you take more than a total of 50,000 litres of water from any lake, stream, ditch, and pond or groundwater source.

Pumping water from a stream or a well for several hours a day can add up to hundreds of thousands of litres of water used. If you have a water meter installed, you can directly check the amount of water you take daily or call your local Ministry of the Environment regional office for assistance with calculating or estimating the water taking.

You are not required to get a Permit to Take Water:

- if you use less than 50,000 litres of water per day
- if you use rainwater collected and stored in a rooftop cistern
- if you use water supplied by someone who already has a valid Permit to Take Water, such as a municipality or your neighbour
- for livestock watering or firefighting purposes.

What are the benefits of having a Permit to Take Water?

- By following terms and conditions of your permit, you will be complying with environmental laws and demonstrating good environmental stewardship.
- A permit helps to ensure fair sharing of our water resources.
- A permit promotes water conservation and recycling of water.
- An approved permit will help protect you against allegations that you are impacting the water supply of other operations or individuals.
- It is required by law.

How do I get a Permit to take water?

1. Pre-consultation:

- You are encouraged to contact your regional Ministry of the Environment office before submitting an application for a Permit to Take Water. The application requirements will be clarified during the consultation, helping you avoid lengthy delays due to missing or incomplete information. Having your consultant and/or engineer present is also recommended, since the discussion will include whether or not you will require a technical study.

2. Completion of the application form:

- The application form and any required supporting documents are submitted to the ministry. You, as the owner/operator, can apply or you can have a designate or a consultant complete the application for you. If a technical study is required, it must be completed by a qualified person and submitted with the application form.

3. Ministry evaluation:

- Your application and supporting documents are reviewed by ministry staff, who will take into consideration any environmental impacts. Any concerns are addressed through the review process.

4. Permit issued:

- The ministry will issue a permit if it is satisfied that the water taking will not cause environmental impacts.
- The ministry may visit your greenhouse to inspect the operations included in your Permit to Take Water, if a complaint is received or in the event of a spill.

What are the Categories for a Permit to Take Water?

All water taking applications are classified based on their risk of causing environmental impacts or interferences with other water users. There are three risk categories:

Category 1 is considered low risk and is generally for renewals where there is no history of interference complaints.

Category 2 is for water takings with a greater potential to cause adverse environmental impacts or interference. The taking meets the criteria set out in the Permit to Take Water Manual which explains the ministry's decision making process. These applications require a report and must be certified by a qualified person.

Category 3 may be considered high risk and requires that a qualified person prepare a technical study on your proposed water taking.

Greenhouse water taking is generally classified as Category 3 because of the type of water source (streams, stormwater and wastewater ponds or wells), the pumping rate, and the frequency of water taking.

How much does a Permit to Take Water cost?

There is no Ministry of the Environment application fee for the Permit to Take Water for greenhouse and agricultural uses.

- However, the program regulations and policies require technical studies for most users prepared by a qualified person or consultant. These studies can help you to understand the size and quality of your water supply.
- Additionally, all permit holders are required to keep records of their water taking. Installing and maintaining a flow meter will help monitor your daily water taking.
- Collaborating with your water taking neighbours on technical studies, where possible, may help reduce costs.

What happens after I receive my Permit to Take Water?

You will have responsibilities once you obtain your Permit to Take Water.

- Ensure you are taking water within the terms and conditions of the permit.
- Collect and record the volumes of water taken daily and submit your records each year to the ministry's online Water Taking and Reporting System.
- Ensure your Permit to Take Water is renewed as required.
- Be prepared to reduce your water taking if low water conditions are declared (i.e. during periods of drought).
- Keep a copy of your Permit to Take Water on site.
- Contact the Ministry of the Environment if you receive any complaints regarding your water taking.
- The ministry may visit your greenhouse to inspect your water taking operations if a complaint is received or in the event of a spill.

Why do I have to record and submit my water taking information?

The ministry uses detailed information about each water taking to manage and protect Ontario's water supplies. By tracking water takings, the government can resolve disputes and in some cases prevent interferences with other users' supplies and ensure that water is being conserved and fairly shared.

Summary – Requirements of Greenhouse Operators

- ✓ Obtain a Permit to Take Water and renew before it expires
- ✓ Take water within the conditions of your Permit to Take Water
- ✓ Monitor water taking and water levels
- ✓ Annually report your water taking to the ministry

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please visit the following Ministry of the Environment websites or contact one of the offices listed below.

Permit to Take Water Forms:

- Guide to the Permit to Take Water Application Form
http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/resources/STD01_078777.html
- Application Form:
http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/resources/STD01_078776.html

Or contact one of the offices listed below.

Ministry of the Environment	
For General Information about the Permit to Take Water Program Tel: 416-325-4000 or 1-800-565-4923	Northern Regional Office (Thunder Bay) Tel: 807-475-1205 or 1-800-875-7772
Central Region Office (North York) Tel: 416-326-6700 or 1-800-810-8048	Southwestern Regional Office (London) Tel: 519-873-5000 or 1-800-265-7672
Eastern Regional Office (Kingston) Tel: 613-549-4000 or 1-800-267-0974	West Central Regional Office (Hamilton) Tel: (905) 521-7640 or 1-800-668-4557

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